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Southern New Hampshire University President Selected to Join Department of Education

Manchester, N.H.-President of Southern New Hampshire University, Paul LeBlanc, has been selected by The Department of Education to join the Department as Senior Advisor to the Under Secretary Ted Mitchell. In his role, LeBlanc will assist the Department's innovation agenda, focusing on the competency-based education experimental sites project and developing new accreditation pathways for innovative programs in higher education.

In December 2013, the Department of Education issued a request for information soliciting ideas for experiments with potential to increase quality and reduce costs in higher education while maintaining or increasing the programmatic and fiscal integrity of Title IV student aid programs. The Department was interested in testing ideas that could improve student persistence and academic success, result in shorter time to completion, and reduce students' reliance on loans, especially among lower-income students and students who struggle academically. Institutions were formally invited to join the experimental sites project in January 2014.

These experimental sites and other programs will open the door to higher education innovation aimed at increasing college access and providing more affordable and flexible paths for students seeking quality credentials.

"I look forward to working with Under Secretary Mitchell and the Department on these important issues," said LeBlanc. "I hope to help the Department, and all of us, answer the many questions we still have about competency-based education. The Department's innovation agenda has the potential to reshape and change higher education and ultimately to better serve students. The opportunity to play even a small part in that effort was irresistible."

"There are so many opportunities for innovation and collaboration in higher education," said Under Secretary Ted Mitchell. "As the President of Southern New Hampshire University, Paul has been a leader in competency-based education and we are glad to have him join us in our efforts to improve college opportunity for all of America's students."

Southern New Hampshire University is a private, nonprofit, accredited institution with more than 60,000 students across its three main programs, making it one of the fastest growing universities in the United States. SNHU has become a national leader in developing innovative and more affordable pathways to a degree. Its College for America program was the first competency-based degree program approved by the Department of Education under "direct assessment" provisions in Title IV, thus decoupling learning

from the credit-hour and conventional course structures. It was an early leader in three-year degree programs and its SNHU Advantage Program received national attention for reducing the cost of a four-year degree by 40 percent. In 2012, SNHU was named the 12th most innovative company in the world. SNHU has embraced and excelled in higher education innovations to become the second largest non-profit provider of online degrees and has built a national brand.

“Under Paul’s leadership, SNHU has flourished, grown, and transformed in ways we could scarcely imagine just a few years ago, said Mark A. Ouellette, chair of the SNHU Board of Trustees. “This role with The Department of Education reflects the strength and breadth of our success and innovation story, one that we know will continue with Paul’s ongoing leadership into the future.”

LeBlanc will begin a leave of absence from the university on March 9 with service through May 30. During this time, LeBlanc will be based in Washington, D.C. Operations will be handled by a strong team at the university and LeBlanc will meet periodically with the group and continue to manage the university at the highest decision-making level.

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